

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0977

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINS, MILI, MOPS,(4 6, LE
SUBJ: POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT OF RIF'AT AL-ASSAD'S FORCES IN
FAYADIYAH INCIDENT

REF: DAO BEIRUT IR 6 857 0039 79

1. THE UNANSWERED QUESTION IN GENERAL KHOURY'S REPORT, AND
IT MAY BE A VERY BASIC ONE, IS WHO ORDERED THE ADF SEARCH
ROADBLOCK TO BE PLACED AT FAYADIYAH ON FEB. 6 (TWICE) AND
AND AGAIN ON FEB. 7. IN DHOORY'S WORKS, IT WAS NOT THE ADF
COMMAND, BUT RATHER "ONE OF THE OFFICERS OF THE ROADBLOCK
WHO WANTED TO KEEP IT IN PLACE."

2. THE RELATED QUESTION IS WHY ON FEB. 8 THESE SAME SYRIAN
TROOPS AROUND FAYADIYAH REFUSED TO ACCEPT A CEASEFIRE
AGREED TO BY THE ADF COMMAND AND BOTH SYRIAN AND
LEBANESE GOVERNMENTS.

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3. A GENERALLY WELL INFORMED LOCAL JOURNALIST,
TO WHOM WE POSED THESE QUESTIONS, SAID HE HAD HEARD
FROM SYRIAN OFFICERS RETURNING FROM LEBANON THAT SYRIAN
FORCES AT FAYADIYAH HAD TAKEN OVER THREE HOURS TO RESPOND
TO A DIRECT ORDER FROM DEPUTY MINDEF NAJI JAMIL TO
CEASE FIRE ON FEB. 8. SOURCE SAID HIS BEST INFORMED
SPECULATION WAS THAT SYRIAN TROOPS INVOLVED

WERE FROM RIF'AT AL-ASSAD'S DEFENSE COMPANIES AND THEY WERE ENGAGED IN A VENDETTA MISSION RESULTING FROM A RECENT FALLING OUT BETWEEN RIF'AT AL-ASSAD AND TONY FRANJEIH. THE TWO HAD BEEN RUNNING A LARGE SCALE SMUGGLING OPERATION THROUGH THE FAYADIYAH AREA WITH THE ACQUIESCENCE OF COL. ANTOINE BARAKAT, WHO IS RELATED TO FRANJEIH. ACCORDING TO THIS ACCOUNT RIF'AT'S MEN ESTABLISHED THE SEARCH ROADBLOCK FOR THE COMBINED PURPOSE OF HINDERING THE SMUGGLING AND PROVOKING BARAKAT.

4. DEPUTY SPEAKER OF SYRIAN PEOPLE'S COUNCIL JAMMUS CONFIRMED TO DCM HE HAD SPENT ABOUT FIVE HOURS FEB 8 PINNED DOWN IN THE FAYADIYAH BARRAKS. HE REFUSED TO ASSESS BLAME FOR INCIDENT BUT STATED EMPHATICALLY HIS VIEW THAT PROBLEM NOT SOLVED AND THAT MORE SUCH INCIDENTS COULD BE EXPECTED IN THE FUTURE.

5. COMMENT: WE DO NOT KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THE FAYADIYAH OPERATION AND THE SURROUNDING CIRCUMSTANCES TO SAY WHETHER THIS ACCOUNT REPRESENTS ANYTHING MORE THAN THE STANDARD "VENALITY" INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS. OFFICIAL SYRIAN VERSION--THAT IT WAS ADF COMMANDER AL-KHATIB WHO ORDERED THE ROADBLOCKS AT FAYADIYAH--DOES NOT

SQUARE WITH GENERAL KHOURY'S ACCOUNT. IT IS KNOWN,
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HOWEVER, THAT RIF'AT'S FORCES IN LEBANON ARE NOT UNDER ADF COMMAND. WE HAVE HEARD A NUMBER OF STORIES THAT OFFICERS OF THE DEFENSE COMPANIES HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN SMUGGLING REFRIGERATORS, TELEVISION SETS AND THE LIKE INTO SYRIA TO SELL AT TEX FREE PRICES ON LOCAL MARKET. RIF'AT'S AND TONY FRANJEIH'S NAMES HAVE BEEN LINKED IN THE PAST. THE ABRUPT AND INVOLUNTARY REMOVAL OF WOUNDED FROM EAST BEIRUT MILITARY HOSPITAL ALSO SOUNDS LIKE RIF'AT AND THE REPORTS OF BLUFF AND BLUSTER BUT POOR MILITARY PERFORMANCE ON THE PART OF THE SYRIAN FORCE INITIALLY AT FAYAKIYAH IS ALSO CONSISTENT. IN OUR OBSERVATION, THE DEFENSC COMPANIES ARE WELL EQUIPPED BUT DO VERY LITTLE ACTUAL COMBAT TRAINING IN THEIR BASE UNITS AROUND DAMASCUS AND CONSEQUENTILY ARE NOT PARTICULARLY WELL DISCIPLINED, OR COHESIVE COMBAT FORCE. ALL IN ALL, THIS VERSION OF EVENTS COULD EXPLAIN SOME OF THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY GENERAL KHOURY'S REPORT OF THE INCIDENT.
MURPHY

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